

# **The Small Business Investment and Promotion Act**



## **Ensuring a Stable Labor Supply through Market-Based Temporary Visa Adjustment**

The seasonal nature of Maine's tourism industry makes it difficult for employers to find and hire enough temporary workers from the local population. For other Maine industries, the lack of skilled technicians to handle short-term high tech jobs is a continuing problem.

The scarcity of visas for temporary skilled and unskilled workers is hurting Maine's economy. Businesses scramble at the beginning of each fiscal year to apply for the artificially low number of H-1B and H-2B visas that allow foreign workers to fill these work positions. Legislation cosponsored by Rep. Allen last year eased the pain temporarily but part of that fix is set to expire this year. In past years these visas were exhausted on the very first day they were made available.

Lack of a reliable temporary labor supply in seasonal industries can mean less work for year-round Maine residents. Businesses unable to hire individuals to handle less desirable jobs are often forced to cut back on hours. For example, a restaurant owner may decide not to open for breakfast if he can't hire individuals to bus tables or wash dishes, meaning less work for the local residents working as hosts and servers.

A provision of the Small Business Investment and Promotion Act would raise the caps on both H1-B and H-2B visas from 66,000 to 85,000 per year. The numerical caps would then be raised or lowered by specific percentages based on market demand. This will ensure an appropriate number of visas are issued to protect the Maine economy.

---